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COMPREHENSIVE EXAMINATION OF THEMATIC ISSUES RELATING TO THE ELIMINATION OF RACIAL DISCRIMINATION

Written statement submitted by the International Organization for the Elimination of All Forms of Racial Discrimination, a non-governmental organization in special consultative status

The Secretary-General has received the following written statement which is circulated in accordance with Economic and Social Council resolution 1996/31.

[20 May 1999]

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1. Racism and racial discrimination in all its multifaceted manifestations has invariably had a negative impact on human society throughout decades and centuries of documented history. Therefore, it is incumbent upon modern society at the end of the twentieth century to seriously evaluate itself and face its weaknesses in order to rid the world of this dangerous ailment threatening the future of forthcoming generations. Such a critical assessment of the past and present is a major test of our binding sense of individual and group responsibility under the guardianship of this great international organization, the United Nations, which we have agreed to recognize as an international instrument for peace and prosperity on this planet.

2. One of the first things that comes to mind in relation to racism and racial discrimination is that it is a phenomenon which has persisted throughout human history and resulted in many afflictions and tragedies. One of the most recent tragedies was the premeditated plan to annihilate the native Indians, as well as the exploitation of Africans, in the continent we know now as America.

3. However, what appears to be happening is that this phenomenon, with its ethnic, religious and racial elements, has begun to diminish in popularity. Little by little, it is being replaced and re-manifested through a new scale designed to discriminate between nations and peoples on the basis of rich versus poor nations and developed versus developing countries.

4. The peoples of advanced nations whose progressive civilization made strides in science and technology in general look condescendingly upon peoples of less advanced nations. What makes the gap wider and worse for humanity is that some of the advanced nations have constantly taken advantage of the bad circumstances from which less advanced nations have suffered. By doing so, advanced nations have gained even more power over the less advanced nations and have managed to continue exhausting their resources. This is often done in devious and insidious ways that obstruct any potential for advancement and progress.

5. This has led to major disparities, instability and imbalance between States as witnessed especially in comparisons between West and East, North and South, whereby the injustice and oppression are so deep rooted and widespread that the inequity is self-evident. Moreover, empirical studies and statistics further support that two thirds of the world's revenues go to one third of the world's population, whereas one third of the world's revenue goes to two thirds of the developing world's population.

6. Since the world has become a "global village" due to more efficient and sophisticated communications and transportation networks, it has been easier to follow its overall momentum. A general sense of injustice and oppression has devastated the populations of developing nations, leading some groups to migrate in unrestrained large numbers to the developed world. The negative and tragic consequences of such wide-scale migration have affected both the migrating people and the populations in which they had to be integrated.

7. At the same time, this general sense of injustice and oppression has led other groups to an angry display of hostility. The dangerous consequences of such rebellion have made the threat of violence and terrorism a reality for

the innocent victims, who always end up paying the price with their lives for crimes they did not commit and oppressive circumstances they are not responsible for.

8. We think that combating racism and racial discrimination should be undertaken through combating its basic roots as manifested in an ever-widening disparity between extreme states of poverty/wealth, illiteracy/literacy and underdevelopment/advancement. The upcoming World Conference against Racism and Racial Discrimination, Xenophobia and Related Intolerance should focus on these basic elements of racism, especially in relation to the issue of underdevelopment. We should try to exert our efforts to address this problematic phenomenon of development (i.e. progress and prosperity) on the one hand, and underdevelopment on the other. It is important to highlight this issue rather than to keep addressing the ethnic, religious and racial symptoms since these seem to be merely the peripheral side-effects which have commonly and typically taken priority in previous meetings. So far, the focus on the ethnic, religious and racial manifestations has only succeeded in generating recommendations and drafting resolutions by well-meaning people. It has neither been effective nor has it had the desired long-lasting impact on human nature and history. It has proven almost impossible to design effective programmes to get rid of these symptoms in society.

9. The more powerful among us, who have achieved high levels of progress in science and technology, have to assist their brothers and sisters in humanity to attain the same level if we truly want to eliminate discrimination. The idea of keeping technology and modern science away from the developing world is dangerous and threatens terrible consequences which will affect the Western world itself in the long run.

10. Combating racism and racial discrimination cannot be done with kind words or through media and propaganda-oriented donations. What the developing world needs is neither food, which will be eaten by the strongest among them, nor arms which the tyrants will use against the weaker ones. The developing world needs the means to develop and progress. This end cannot be achieved except through education, and education alone. Thus, the foreign aid that is offered by developed countries to developing ones which by the way, should be multiplied many-fold, must not be dispersed except via an international law for the construction of schools, educational institutions and universities. This is the first step towards paving the path to enhance the potential for development and, in turn, to fight discrimination.

11. The leadership of the developed world must realize that their efforts in regard to the problem of underdevelopment and its related consequences of racism and racial discrimination are not only in the best interests of their own people in the long run, but also that such efforts are debts they should pay in expiation of their previous guilt as bearers of the responsibility of what has resulted from their previous colonial policies. In other words, they must realize that efforts on their part are not favours or acts of condescending generosity. What developed nations enjoy today in the Western world is the result of great strides taken previously by other ancient civilizations in India, China, Persia, North Africa and north of the Arabian peninsula such as the Chaldean, Assyrian, Babylonian, Phoenician, Sumerian, and Pharaonic civilizations. As the American historian William Durant stated

in his large volumes entitled "The Story of Civilization", the Western world would be gravely mistaken if it thought that its civilization and the luxuries it offers today has been the result of the Greek and Roman civilizations. The Greek and Roman civilizations were merely elementary students of the Eastern civilization.

12. Our organization calls upon members and NGOs to support the following recommendations:

(a) Asserting that foreign aid offered to developing countries must be regulated by international law and directed only toward education, and education alone;

(b) Super-Powers should be obligated to abide by the laws of the International Court of Justice;

(c) The unilateral veto which the super-Powers exercise must be subservient to the rulings of the International Court of Justice.

We believe such recommendations are indispensable for world peace and progress.